

THE ROLE OF ACADEMIA AND HEADMASTER TO ENHANCE OVERALL EDUCATIONAL AND LIFE QUALITY IN THE DIGITAL ERA IN TAKENGON

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this community service is to socialize to participants about the quality of education and life. This is due to the rise of issues among students in schools. This International Community Service (PKM) activity has benefits including providing the community with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to improve the quality of life and overcome local challenges, providing concrete solutions to educational, social or economic problems, which can improve community welfare. The real impact that can be seen from this activity is the increased community participation in the decision-making process related to local development and the establishment of strong social networks and partnerships between the community, academics, and other related parties. Outcome indicators are the number and level of community participation in PKM activities, whether in planning, implementation, or evaluation as well as the level of involvement and support from related parties, such as government, academic institutions, or the private sector. By understanding these benefits, impacts, and outcomes, PKM implementation can be an effective means of realizing positive change in the communities served. Continuous evaluation during and after project implementation can help ensure that community goals and needs are optimally met.

KEYWORDS: *Socialization, Educational Quality, Life Quality, Digital Era*

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to realize the aspirations of the Higher Education Act, which encourages collaboration in the Tri Dharma activities of Higher Education, the Community Service Community (KOMPAK), in collaboration with several universities, organized an international community service program. KOMPAK itself is a group of academics from various higher education institutions in Indonesia who share the same intention to contribute positively to society by

addressing concerns and issues in the community. This activity aims to create a resilient, advanced, and development-oriented society and is conducted regularly every semester (Biby et al., 2023).

Community Service (PKM) is one of the Tri Dharma activities of Higher Education that must be carried out by the academic community as an effort to realize the goals of the law, in conjunction with the other two dharmas, and involves all academic members: lecturers, students, education staff, and alumni. PKM is a concept that encompasses various activities carried out by individuals or groups with the aim of providing direct benefits to the community. PKM activities include the application of knowledge and skills to solve problems or improve the quality of life in society. Community service is not just about providing material or financial assistance, but also involves active participation in various programs and projects aimed at improving community welfare. This can cover various fields such as education, health, environment, economy, and culture (Anggraini, 2007).

The academic community observes the trend of globalization, which provides opportunities for the scientific community to disseminate knowledge to the global community, whether through international research publications, inter-country scientific activities, or community service activities in remote corners of the world. This led to the creation of a platform/community named the Academic Sharing Action Community (KABA). KABA aims to build a platform that connects lecturers with various stakeholders to share relevant knowledge and practices, while also fulfilling the Key Performance Indicators (IKU) and Institutional Performance Targets (IKT) of universities and individual lecturers.



Figure 1. The Committee Meeting on the Issue of Education Quality.

This collaborative community service program was held at Linge Land Hotel in Takengon, Central Aceh, Indonesia, involving 33 universities in partnership with Universiti Utara Malaya, Monash University Australia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Central Aceh Regency, and the Regional Education Office of Central Aceh Regency. The target audience for this PKM (Community Service) program is the principals of middle and high schools across Central Aceh Regency.

Solutions and Target Issues

Takengon is a city located in Central Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia. Below are some details regarding the geographical and cultural conditions in Takengon. Geographically, Takengon is located in the central part of Aceh Province, making it a strategic hub for economic and social activities in the region. The area is generally mountainous, with beautiful natural scenery. Takengon is situated on a high plateau, so the air is relatively cool. The climate in Takengon tends to be cool, especially in the highland areas, making it an attractive place to visit.

The majority of Takengon's population belongs to the Gayo ethnic group. The Gayo people have a rich culture and unique traditions, including traditional ceremonies, dances, and music. Traditional ceremonies, such as weddings, guest receptions, and religious events, are held while preserving Gayo customs and traditions. Local art and culture are highly valued in Takengon, with traditional dances, handicrafts, and Gayo music frequently featured in cultural events. Takengon is also known for its distinctive Acehnese cuisine, including unique Gayo dishes. Gayo coffee is famous throughout Indonesia. Most of Takengon's residents are Muslim, and religious life plays a significant role in daily life. Many Takengon residents rely on agriculture and plantations, such as coffee, vegetables, and fruit farming, for their livelihoods. With its natural beauty and cultural richness, Takengon is an attractive destination for tourists interested in exploring the diversity and uniqueness of Central Aceh.

Despite efforts to improve the education system in Indonesia, including in Central Aceh, several challenges still exist in the region's educational sector. Some of the educational issues in Central Aceh may include the following:

1. **Accessibility and Infrastructure**

Some areas may face challenges in accessing educational facilities. The distance between schools and students' homes can be a barrier for some students.

2. **Lack of Educational Facilities and Equipment**

Some schools may still lack adequate facilities and equipment, such as well-equipped libraries, laboratories, and sports facilities. This can impact the quality of education provided.

3. Lack of Human Resources

The shortage of qualified and well-trained teachers can be a problem in some schools (Ulva et al., 2023). This can affect the quality of teaching and learning.

4. High Dropout Rates

Economic and social factors often contribute to high dropout rates in some areas, hindering the educational development of the local community.

5. Family Economic Conditions

The economic conditions of families can affect students' access to education. Low-income families may struggle to meet their children's educational needs.

6. Importance of Non-Formal Education

Non-formal education, such as vocational or skills training, may not receive enough attention, even though it can provide an alternative for students who do not continue with formal education.

7. Impact of Conflict and Natural Disasters

Aceh, including Central Aceh, has experienced the impact of conflicts and natural disasters, which can affect educational infrastructure and student welfare.

8. Gender Equality

Some areas still face challenges in achieving gender equality in education. Some women may encounter obstacles in accessing education.

Community service is one of the essential elements of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, alongside education and research. The "Collaborative Community Service Discourse" initiative represents a joint agreement among universities across Indonesia to continue focusing on contributing to educating the public in various fields, including technology, health, economics, education, and more. The programs implemented align with the current needs of society, providing the community with a better understanding of the materials presented in these community service activities.

2. METHOD

The implementation of this Community Service Program followed several stages:

a. August 4, 2023:

Initial location survey, assessment, and identification of issues for the selected Community Service (PKM) targets. The targets for this program are the principals of middle and high schools across Central Aceh Regency. The partner targets include Universiti Utara Malaya, Monash University Australia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Central Aceh Regency, and

the Regional Education Office of Central Aceh Regency. The outreach conducted involved providing information about the upcoming community service activities and gathering insights from the Regional Education Office and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Central Aceh, which highlighted the current need for educational programs. Educational issues in Central Aceh, similar to many regions in Indonesia, involve challenges that can impact the quality and accessibility of education. Addressing these issues requires support and collaboration from various parties, including the government, educational institutions, the community, and the private sector. This collaboration aims to improve the access, quality, and relevance of education in Central Aceh. During this assessment, the date and agenda for the community service activities were agreed upon, as well as the keynote speakers who will attend from Central Aceh, Malaysia.

- b. August 5 – December 20, 2023: Fundraising.
- c. September 20, 2023: Technical Meeting, preparation of banners, supporting materials for the activities, and travel arrangements.
- d. December 27, 2023: Main event and presentation of materials at the International Community Service Seminar. During the event, participants were organized in accordance with the applicable community service protocols.
- e. December 28, 2023 – January 6, 2024: Reporting.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Implementation Stages

Stage I: Permits and Approvals

Preparation begins with coordination within the team, preparation of tools and materials, and communication with partner organizations and relevant stakeholders.



Figure 2. Survey exploration of organizations.

Stage II: Socialization, Implementation, and Demonstration

Community service programs play a crucial role in building community engagement and participation in development. Effective socialization of the community service program is necessary to ensure that information about the program is communicated well and receives optimal support (Implementation Team, 2020; Implementation Team, 2021).



Figure 3. Opening Remarks by the KABA Chair

Opening Remarks by the Regional Education Office of Central Aceh Regency

In his remarks, Mr. Basri, the Head of GTK Development at the Regional Education Office of Central Aceh Regency, expressed appreciation for the activities carried out by the academic community, specifically the Academic Sharing Action Community (KABA). He highlighted that these activities help enhance public understanding of specific issues and provide valuable education. He hopes that community service programs can be designed with a focus on sustainability, thereby delivering long-term benefits.



Figure 4. Opening Remarks by the Representative of the Central Aceh Education Office



Figure 5. Giving Souvenirs to the School Principals

Keynote Speaker

In this PKM event, KABA hosted Dr. Syamsul Bahrin Zaibon (Associate Dean of the School of Creative Industry Management & Performing Arts (SCIMPA) at Universiti Utara Malaysia). He discussed the positive and negative impacts of multimedia technology on education, which sparked many questions and responses from the attending high school and vocational school principals. He suggested that more Islamic content creators should actively produce content to deliver more positive and educational messages to the public. The event was attended by lecturers from various universities in Banda Aceh and across Indonesia, both in person and online.



Figure 6. Main Speaker



Figure 7. Participants of Event



Figure 8. Photo Session with All Partisipants of Activity

Stage III: Evaluation of Community Service Activities

The preparation for this stage began in August, including location scouting, target identification, fundraising, technical meetings, and the international community service seminar (PKM) at Linge Land Hotel, Central Aceh, Indonesia. The evaluation of the activities was conducted with the principals of middle and high schools across Central Aceh Regency, the Regional Education Office of Central Aceh Regency, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Central Aceh Regency. Evaluating community service (PKM) activities is crucial to measure the success and impact of the project on the served community. Evaluation can be carried out through several steps and criteria, including:

1. Assessing Goal Achievement : Evaluate how well the goals and objectives of the PKM have been met. Did the project achieve the desired outcomes?

2. Impact Assessment : Evaluate the positive impacts generated by the PKM activities on the community, such as improved welfare, increased knowledge, or positive behavioral changes.
2. Community Engagement : Measure the extent of community involvement in each stage of the project. Active community participation can be considered an indicator of success.
3. Sustainability : Assess whether the PKM activities can continue after the project ends. Community involvement and local support are crucial factors for sustainability.
4. Feedback Collection : Gather direct feedback from the community regarding their experience with the PKM activities. This can provide further insights into the real impact and community perceptions.

This evaluation should be conducted systematically and continuously during and after the PKM project. The results can be used to improve future activities and ensure that community service efforts provide significant benefits. The final evaluation results from the Regional Education Office of Central Aceh Regency, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Central Aceh Regency, and the principals of middle and high schools across Central Aceh Regency were very positive. They expressed enthusiasm and gratitude to the academics who came and engaged directly with the community to apply their knowledge. It is hoped that the socialization and training provided will empower the community by enabling them to play an active role in problem-solving and self-development.

Community service programs should be able to provide skills, knowledge, or resources that the community can apply independently. Additionally, socialization can raise awareness and understanding of important issues, potentially leading to changes in attitudes and behaviors related to those issues. Socialization can also build and expand networks and cooperation among program organizers, the community, and other stakeholders. Good collaboration can strengthen the implementation and impact of the program.

4. CONCLUSION

In this International Community Service (PKM) activity, based on the brief description above, the conclusions is through various programs and initiatives by the academic community, society can gain direct benefits in the form of improved quality of life, education, health, and other aspects. Community service activities (PKM) encourage collaboration among various parties, including academics, practitioners, and the community. This collaboration promotes the active involvement of all parties in the development process and problem-solving. Through community service activities, opportunities are created to strengthen relationships among communities. This collaboration can reduce social disparities and build solidarity among different community groups. Community

service activities can also be a source of knowledge development and innovation. By involving academics and practitioners in solving real-world problems, there can be an exchange of ideas and development of innovative solutions.

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